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Gulfshore receiving needed renovations

By Tim Nicholas
MBCB Staff Writer

Renovations at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian are well under way, with the wing nearest the Bay of St. Louis stripped to the concrete in all 44 rooms. The wing, which is being completely refurnished, also has three handicap-accessible rooms.

Mississippi Baptists' premiere retreat facility on the Gulf Coast has completed the

during the 1999 season, according to Frank Simmons, Gulfshore Assembly manager. On the ground floor of "A" Wing, the children's area and classrooms are receiving new ceilings and flooring.

The next phase of the renovations includes new and improved exterior lighting and outside fixtures, plus a redecking and extension of the pier.

The extension of the pier will go approximately 340 feet out into the Bay of St. Louis, according to Simmons. He said the bay's tidal floor in recent years has shifted sand into the area where the harbor had been.

At the end of the pier will be installed a 20x40-square-foot lighted, covered platform. Simmons said the pier work will take about two months to complete.

Building renovations are being done by H. Gordon Myrick, general contractor. Total cost of all renovations is approximately \$3.75 million.

Additional existing Gulfshore Assembly facilities include 10 self-contained recreational vehicle sites and a staff house that accommodates groups of 60 people during the off-season, when it is not occupied by

assembly staffers.

Simmons said the staff house allows off-season occupants to do their own cooking. For instance, he said a women's group from Raymond Church, Raymond, is in its seventh year of using the staff house for a retreat.

"We're extremely pleased with the way things are turning out here," said Simmons. "It's a facility that will continue to see a lot of use."

Gulfshore Assembly is open year-round and available for any size church group. The assembly and its pro-



CHECKING SPECS — Frank Simmons (right), manager of Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian, inspects "A" Wing window installations with an unidentified contractor's foreman. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

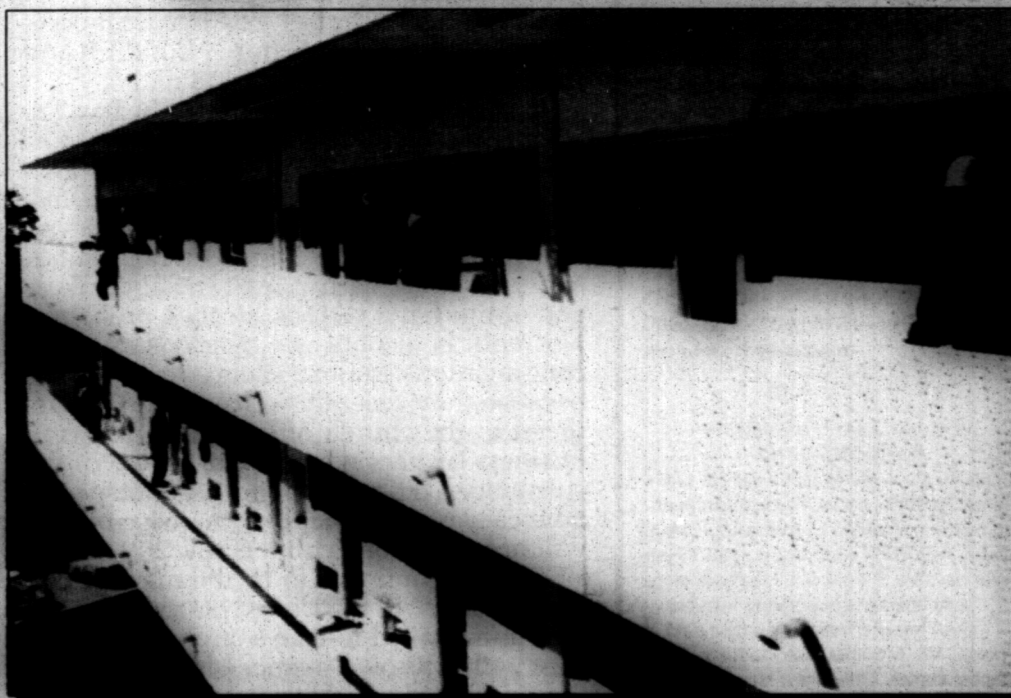
grams are supported by gifts to the Cooperative Program.

For more information on Gulfshore Assembly and its pro-

grams, contact manager Frank Simmons at 100 First Street, Pass Christian, MS 39571. Telephone: (228) 452-7261.

Gulfshore Assembly's entrance relocated

A Mississippi Department of Transportation bridge relocation project on U.S. Highway 90 in Pass Christian has caused the entrance to Gulfshore Assembly to be permanently moved one-half mile east of the old turnoff into the assembly. In addition, the railroad overpass at U.S. Highway 90 near the assembly has been moved to the east and the sharp curve at Henderson Point — for many years the bane of first-time travelers to Gulfshore Assembly — has been flattened. Assembly attendees who will be making their first trip since the improvements should be aware of the new entrance.



BARE WALLS — High above the Bay of St. Louis in Pass Christian, workmen continue the complete renovation of "A" Wing at Gulfshore Assembly. The wing has been stripped to the concrete. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)



HIGH AND DRY — Shifting sand from the Bay of St. Louis has clogged the pier area at Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian. The finger piers once held small boats. An extension to the pier is planned as part of the \$3.75 million renovation currently underway at the Mississippi Baptist retreat facility. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

BMDF meets in Jackson

4

NAMB commissions 76

6

Letters to the editor

9

Sunday School lessons

10

major portion of its facelift. "C" Wing, with 32 rooms each equipped with four double beds, is completely remodeled with new bathroom fixtures, vanity area, and furnishings.

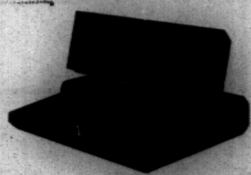
Gulfshore Assembly maintenance staffers are installing new air conditioning in "A" Wing and painting the exterior.

The auditorium in the Earl C. Kelly Center for Christian Training has new carpeting, a 45,000-watt sound system, and an updated lighting system featuring dome, fluorescent, and stage lighting with programmable multicolored light bars.

Also undergoing renovation are the assembly's lobby (new carpet and window treatments) and four apartments near the entrance of the assembly, each with two bedrooms (all with new furnishings and fresh paint).

The renovated "A" Wing and auditorium were in use

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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God created in our image

A few weeks ago an editorial in this space entitled, *Is Anyone Listening In Hollywood?*, pointed out that the phenomenal success of family-friendly network television shows and movies such as *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?*, *Touched By An Angel*, *Babe*, and *Toy Story* should be a sign to the American entertainment industry that the people of this country are hungry for entertainment that doesn't insult their values and ridicule their morals.

In an industry that lives and dies by overnight ratings and box office sales, it would seem someone might notice the figures family-friendly shows are rolling up day after day and arrive at the conclusion that maybe people are more interested in such fare than in the cultural sewage that passes for sophisticated entertainment today.

Which brings us back to the premise of the earlier editorial that asked the question, *Is anyone listening in Hollywood?* Not at NBC, apparently.

Last week NBC began to broadcast the weekly series *God, The Devil, and Bob*, a dreadful piece of adolescent cartooning that depicts God as a hip, foul-mouthed beer drinker who commiserates with his buddy and apparent co-equal, Satan.

God, the Devil, and Bob is produced by Carsey-Werner Co., which is also responsible for producing:

- ◆ *Third Rock From the Sun*, an NBC comedy (term used loosely) about sex-crazed aliens and dumb earthlings.

- ◆ *That '70's Show*, a Fox comedy (term used loosely) about sex-crazed teenagers and dumb parents.

In *God, the Devil, and Bob*, chums God and the devil make a friendly wager to pin humanity's survival on an aimless Detroit auto worker.

The pilot episode has something to offend just about anyone in the main-

stream of American life — a coarse and vulgar father, a lying teenaged daughter, a disaffected young son, and a wife/mother who is shown reading a book entitled, *Why We Don't Kill Our Children*.

Believers in God are equated with UFO enthusiasts. A cigar-chomping evangelist schemes to make money off Bob's revelation from God while receiving a sensuous massage from a buxom young woman in his luxurious office.

Here's a sample of the humor: God calls Bob at home but Bob refuses to pick up the telephone. The answering machine comes on with the familiar beep to leave a message and God says, "Bob, don't screen your Maker!"

Here's a sample of the serious side of the show: At one point Bob rails at God, "You call yourself a loving Father? You're more like a deadbeat dad!"

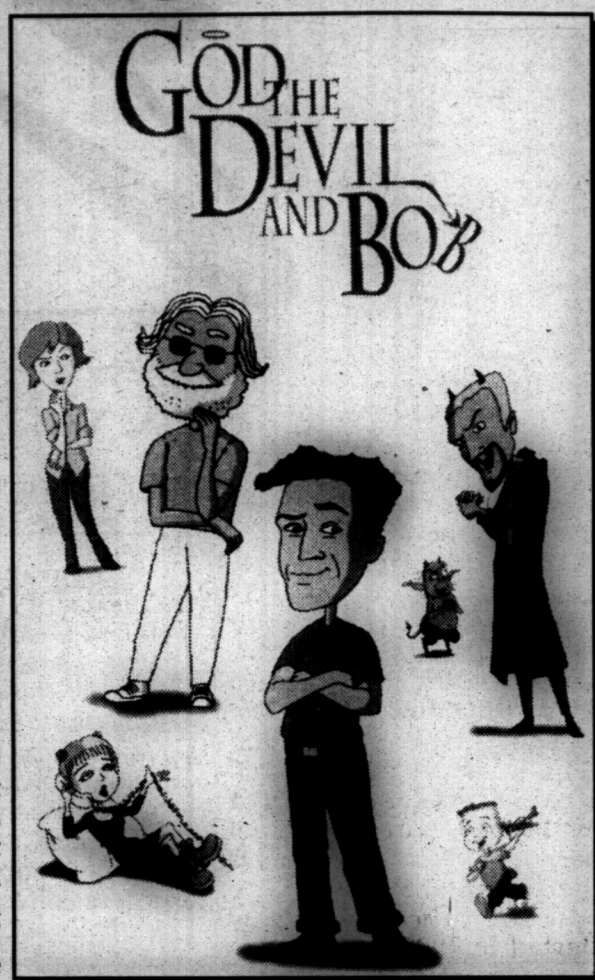
Here's a sample of the show's theology: When Bob frets over the direction his children are taking, God says, "I made a deal with Lucifer a long time ago. I get them until they're 12 and he gets them until they're 20."

That's a lot of sacrilege packed into 30 minutes. The pilot episode was so bad that a number of NBC network affiliates around the country refused to air it. At least three of those stations were in Mississippi: WLBT in Jackson, WDAM in Hattiesburg, and WTVA in Tupelo. WGBC in Meridian chose to air the pilot, while WLOV in Tupelo, the Fox network affiliate, picked it up when WTVA refused to air it.

One of the great dangers of shows like *God, the Devil, and Bob* is the compulsion too many of us apparently feel to create God in our image, instead of the other way around.

Is God a glib dude in cool sunglasses who hangs out in the neighborhood bar and drinks only light beer, or is he the great I Am who sits on a heavenly throne of light encircled by an emerald rainbow (Rev. 4)?

Are God and Satan long-time pals, or are they at continual war with each other for the souls of men and women (1 Peter 5:8)?



Does God marvel over the invention of Pop Tarts — yes, that's in the pilot episode, too — or did he speak the entire universe into existence (Gen. 1)?

Christians have ready answers to such deep mysteries, and it's time we began sharing those answers with a lost world.

Can Hollywood be turned around to the truth? Can America be turned around to the truth? It will be a daunting task, but remember that all things are possible through the true God we serve — and he's not the television version. Let's get busy!

GUEST OPINION:

Whatever happened to Baptist teetotaler?

By Elizabeth K. Holmes, member
Parkway Church, Clinton



The historic Baptist position on alcohol has been one of total abstinence. Not so very long ago it was still fairly common to walk into a Baptist church and see the church covenant, framed and prominently displayed, bearing the statement that "we agree to abstain from all practices that would harm our bodies and lessen our influence for Christ..." or more strongly, "...we engage to abstain from the sale of, and use of, intoxicating drinks as a beverage..." In fact, one may still occasionally enter a rural church building and find such a covenant on the wall.

It is noteworthy that not only has the covenant statement virtually disappeared (I had trouble finding a copy for this article), but the commitment to abstinence, to a large degree, has gone with it. It is believed that 40% of Southern Baptists who regularly attend church are at least social drinkers and some have serious alcohol problems. Not only is alcohol use overlooked, some congregations impose silence on the issue because they greedily welcome the dollars given to the church offering by successful business owners who are purveyors of the substance. What happened to outspoken advocacy of the belief that the wise person will not use strong drink (Prov. 20:1)?

Alcohol continues to be the number one drug of abuse in the United States. Why has the church failed to take a stronger stand at least within its own membership? When did the emphasis on abstinence as a focused point of discussion disappear? When did fear of the displeasure of the social drinking

establishment within the church overtake us and render us silent on this deadly issue? Are we more afraid of losing their contributions than we are of losing the lives of our children?

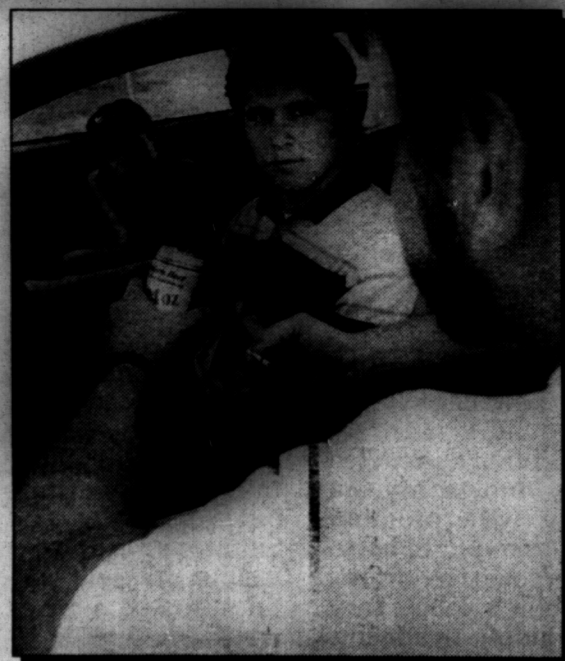
As Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday on March 19 approaches, consider the following quote from an article by Teman Knight, a pastor in Alabama: "The Bible clearly shows that strong drink destroys you (Nah. 1:10; Prov.

23:29-32), your family (Gen. 9:19:32), your financial security (Prov. 23:21), your judgment (Prov. 20:1; 23:19-21), your ability to lead (Prov. 31:4 and 1 Tim. 3:2-3,8), and your relationship with God (Hosea 4:11; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10)."

The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention has produced a pledge card that represents an effort to call us back to our historic Baptist commitment to total abstinence from alcohol as a beverage and total abstinence from any illegal substance.

Consider calling ERLC at (800) 475-9127 and ordering enough commitment cards for your entire congregation. The cards are available free of charge while supplies last. Perhaps it is time for our pulpits to forcefully preach on this subject and then call on church members to make a commitment to an alcohol-and drug-free lifestyle by signing the pledge.

Holmes is the former senior consultant for women's and family issues at the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission.



Substance Abuse
Prevention Sunday
March 19, 2000

Penitentiary graduation yields 21 degrees

ANGOLA, La. (BP) — As the Louisiana State Penitentiary inmates sang, their faces shined. With hands raised towards heaven, the men clad in black gowns and caps celebrated the first four-year graduation service ever to be held at the Angola prison.

"I'm trading my sorrows," they sang. "I'm trading my shame. I'm laying them down for the joy of the Lord."

Trading as many as two to four years of intensive biblical studies in exchange for diplomas adorned with their names, these 21 inmates received undergraduate degrees Jan. 31 from New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS), one of six seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Angola extension center, set amidst 18,000 acres of farmland enclosed by barbed wire and steel bars, is one of 16 centers the seminary currently operates. The center was started in 1995 after hundreds of prisoners had completed the "Experiencing God" Bible study and wanted more education to prepare themselves for ministering within prison congregations.

"The extension center at Angola was birthed out of a dream to reach our entire state of Louisiana for Christ," said Thomas Strong, NOBTS dean of the college of undergraduate studies.

"The students who graduated are men whose faith in Christ is genuine and who are determined to reach the world in which they now find themselves for Christ," Strong noted.

"In here, you cannot fake Christianity," said inmate graduate John Sheehan. "People are watching 24 hours a day."

Now with more than 100 students, the seminary's teachings "benefit not just [the graduates], but the rest of the population," Sheehan said. "Angola is probably one of the best-



FREE TO MINISTER — Chuck Kelley (right), president of New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS), congratulates inmate John Anthony Sheehan, who received his Bachelor of General Studies degree from NOBTS's extension center at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. Set amidst 18,000 acres of farmland enclosed by razor wire and steel bars, the Angola center is one of 16 extension centers that NOBTS currently operates. The graduation was made possible through the tri-partnership between Judson Association in Baton Rouge, La., the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and NOBTS. (BP photo by Doy Cave)

evangelized prisons, but it needs people to be shepherds."

"Welcome to the place where men are not ashamed of the Gospel, to be judged, to agree, to repent, and see God's grace," said John Robson, director of the Angola extension center, at the ceremony's beginning. "Welcome to a place where men pray by giving up their struggle and center down and rest in him," he said.

"I have told your story everywhere I have been," said NOBTS President Chuck Kelley to the graduates, family members, and prison officials attending the graduation ceremony. Referring to "the story of how in this place devoted to punishment, God is doing restoration," Kelley conferred four associate in pastoral ministries degrees, one bachelor of arts degree, and 17 bachelor of general studies degrees. One inmate had both his associate and bachelor of general studies degrees conferred at the ceremony.

In his message to the graduates, the seminary president said, "I am not here simply to confer your degree. I am here to look you in your face and tell you that the reason for your training is because the church needs your work in ministry, whether it be through letters, church planting (inside and outside), or through witnessing to guards and other inmates."

Warden Burl Cain exhorted the graduates to be a shining light within the prison. "A Christian himself, Cain said, 'You will see many obstacles. Security people will turn against you, and other inmates will turn against you, but you must turn the other cheek.'"

"The greatest hero of the faith was just like you ... in a Roman version of Angola penitentiary," Kelley told the graduates, referring to the apostle Paul.

Sharing a message from Paul's "Letter from Death Row in a Prison in Rome" (2 Timothy 1), Kelley said that Paul was telling Timothy to not be ashamed of Jesus or of him, who was imprisoned for Jesus'

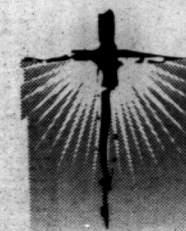
sake. Kelley paraphrased Paul's words: "Do everything on the outside that I am doing on the inside. Stand firm in the midst of the gospel. It is hard on the outside or inside. Join me in his suffering."

Paul put himself in harm's way for sake of gospel, Kelley said. "Our same challenge is to put our life on the line for sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

"We can suffer because of the bad choices we made in our lives or because of the bad choices of others," Kelley said, "or we can suffer because of our devotion to Jesus Christ."

Calling him the original jail minister, Kelley said Paul was broken, battered, abandoned by family and friends, saw church fights and divisions, shipwrecked, hungry, and discouraged.

"Jesus tells us that we can't be in a circumstance that he won't make precious. When you stand in front of him at the end of your days, after all the hurt and discouragement, so great will be the glory in your soul," Kelley preached. "On your mouth



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

**THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE**

Record THE BAPTIST

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won't be the question, 'Why did you let me go through this?' Instead it will be, 'Thank you, Jesus, for what you did to see me through.'

"Do you know why you're here?" Kelley asked the graduates. "It is because God came looking for you. You weren't called because of your resume or your record," he said, "but because he was calling for you."

"God, even knowing every single detail of your life, said, 'I want that one. I love him,'" Kelley said.

Looking back

10 years ago

Daniel Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Church, Atlanta, announces he will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). He said the bedrock Baptist belief is "nothing less than Jesus himself," and not the list of four things in the SBC Peace Committee report.

20 years ago

Arlington Heights Church, Pascagoula, dedicates its new sanctuary. Earl Kelly, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson, preaches at the afternoon dedication ceremony. Howard Taylor is pastor.

50 years ago

Chester Quarles, pastor of First Church, Sylacauga, Ala., accepts the position of executive secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. A native of Gulfport, Quarles is well known in Mississippi, having served as pastor of First Church, Leland, before being called to Alabama.

FamilyNet is Dove nominee

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — "An Evening with The Martins," a one-hour musical celebration produced and broadcast by the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) FamilyNet subsidiary, has been nominated for the Gospel Music Association's Dove Awards in the category of Long-Form Music Video of the Year.

Additionally, a total of 10 projects of FamilyNet, part of NAMB's broadcast communications group, have been named finalists in the 1999 Telly Awards — a record number of Telly Awards received by FamilyNet in a single year.

The Dove Awards recognizes and honors achievement and excellence in Christian music. The awards ceremony will be held April 20 in Nashville, Tenn.

The Telly Awards give recognition to outstanding non-network film and video productions. Entries are judged not against each other, but against a common standard of excellence. Approximately 14-18 percent of entries receive a "Bronze" award as a Telly "finalist," while about 7-10% receive the "Silver" award as a "winner."

FamilyNet is a national television network offering Christian programming through satellite services, cable television companies and local affiliate stations.

BMDF hears Rankin at national meeting

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, encouraged Christian health care professionals attending the national meeting of the Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship (BMDF) in Jackson Feb. 24-27 to reach out to a lost world in need of the Gospel message.

"God is moving in providence and power to fulfill his purpose. The world is moving toward a time when people cannot depend on their culture, but only on Jesus Christ," said the native Mississippian and graduate of Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton.

"Why do you go? Because God compels you to go to... demonstrate the reality of your faith, that they might see Jesus Christ in you," Rankin pointed out.

He quoted Eze. 36:23, which states, "... Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declared the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes (NIV)."

He told of attending a pastor's conference recently in Bangalore, India, where a pastor described being beaten nearly to death by villagers angry at his attempts to share the Gospel.

As soon as his doctors released him from his hospital convalescence, Rankin said, the pastor returned to the same village and again started preaching the Gospel. Today, one of the young men who participated in his beating is pastor of the village's new church.

Laurel orthopedic surgeon John McGraw, program chairman for the national meeting, said over 500 people attended the evening sessions.

"A lot of the folks (in attendance) thought it was the best program we've ever had," for the BMDF meetings, McGraw reported.

Amy Tuck, Mississippi's newly-elected lieutenant governor, welcomed attendees to Mississippi.

L. Graham Smith, director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's church music department, served as worship leader for the meeting. Musical guests included Jubilant Brass; Allen Harris, minister of music at North Oxford Church, Oxford; the William Carey College guitar choir; and the Mississippi Singing Churchmen.

The 2001 BMDF national meeting will be held Feb. 22-25 at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Memphis.

For more information on BMDF, contact executive director James D. Williams at 899 Madison Avenue, Memphis, TN 38146. Tele-phone: (901) 227-5973. E-mail: BMDF@compuserve.com.



GREETINGS — Jerry Rankin (right), president of the International Mission Board, is greeted by Oklahoma City physician Fred Loper (center), president of the Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship (BMDF), and Laurel orthopedic surgeon John McGraw after Rankin addressed BMDF members at their national meeting Feb. 25 in Jackson. McGraw served as program chairman for the meeting. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



HARRELL GARNERS AWARD — Paul Harrell (right), director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) partnership department, is recognized for his long-running commitment to missions by Jackson dentist Bill Boteler Feb. 24 in Jackson at the national meeting of the Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship. Harrell is the retired director of the MBCB brotherhood department. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

75 protesters show up at Fla. conference

BRANDON, Fla. (BP) — About 75 people holding signs protested peacefully on the sidewalk in front of a Southern Baptist church where a conference on homosexual issues facing youth was held Feb. 26, according to a report in the St. Petersburg Times. The "Love Won Out" conference, sponsored by Focus on the Family, was attended by about 700 people at Bell Shoals Church, Brandon, Fla.

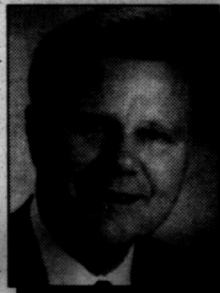
Conference organizers sent out water and soft drinks to the protesters, who gathered as participants were leaving the conference around 5:30 p.m., the Times reported. Prior to the conference, Seminole Heights and Idlewild churches in the Tampa Bay area had been vandalized with slogans in pink spray paint by a group calling itself "Coalition to Convert Baptists," and Idlewild received a bomb scare Feb. 13.

Ken Alford, president of the Florida Baptist Convention and former pastor of Morrison Heights Church in Clinton, is the pastor of Bell Shoals Church.

Values

There was a story in the news that gave a new twist to our "twisted" values here in America. The story was about "road rage." A woman stuck in traffic bumped the car in front of her. While no damage was done, the man in the car got out and as he was walking back toward the woman's car he was screaming at her. Standing beside the car venting his anger, the man reached through the window, grabbed the woman's dog, and threw the small animal out into the traffic where it was hit and killed. The man walked back to his car, got in, and took off — escaped! A reward went out for his capture.

No doubt many of you reading this share some of the feelings that I had when I first read it — anger, disbelief, sadness, consternation, and some feelings I do not know how to describe. It is strange, when you



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

think about it, for it makes you feel rage at someone for having rage. It brings out your personal intolerance for people who are intolerant and it diminishes your respect for that man for his lack of respect for a dog.

Maybe if we were to evaluate our feelings about an incident such as this, it would be revealing to discover the things about which we have become desensitized. Think about the things that do not seem to bother us any more: on average, several college students die each day in alcohol-related automobile wrecks; on average, somewhere

around 3,000 abortions are performed daily and "would-be-kids" are discarded; each day, hundreds of young people become new tobacco addicts and will continue in that lifestyle "until death do them part;" every hour, on the national TV airways the minds of children are bombarded with words that used to be offensive, with principles that are anti-truth, with humor that is both anti-God and anti-decent, and with situations that characterize Christians as being ignorant and intolerant.

Something has happened to us as a nation! I am not exactly

sure how, or when it took place. Our threshold of sensitivity about right things, good things, Godly things, holy things, has been so diminished that it is hard to fathom. We now can discuss the leader of our land having an affair and talk about the weird aspects of the intimacy of that relationship as though we were talking about yesterday's baseball scores. We now are able to discuss the destruction of soon-to-be-born babies with as little passion as we would have in watching a tomato go through the garbage disposal.

How long would it take and how many little dogs would you have to stand and watch being thrown by an angry man out into oncoming traffic to be killed, squashed, and mangled, until it didn't bother you anymore? Would a day be long enough? Or a week? Maybe a hundred dogs are all it would take. Something has happened to us and it is not good!

North American missionaries commissioned

NORCROSS, Ga. (BP) — A group of 76 new missionaries and members of a suburban Atlanta church were challenged during a North American Mission Board (NAMB) commissioning service Feb. 20 to remember Christ's purpose as he ministered to the tax collector Zacchaeus.

"Jesus knew if he could change Zacchaeus he could begin to change the world," said Bob Horner, pastor of Peachtree Corners Church, which hosted the commissioning service.

Just as the crowd acted as a hindrance to Zacchaeus being able to see Jesus, Horner noted, sometimes "the crowd" of Christians does the same for non-Christians today.

"Sometimes we crowd out all people from really seeing the Savior," Horner said. "... Many times we simply don't understand how lost this world is. And as we as a church help send out these missionaries, it's not just they that go out. We go out [through them]."

The 37 couples and two single missionaries were commissioned to serve in a variety of roles across the United States and Canada, joining about 5,000 other missionaries across



COMMISSIONING SERVICE — Nathaniel Bishop (at microphone) and Steve and Carolyn Faith (left) were among 76 North American Mission Board missionaries commissioned during a Feb. 20 service at Peachtree Corners Baptist Church in Norcross, Ga. Bishop serves as director of the HOPE Baptist Center in Detroit, Mich. Steve Faith serves as church and community missions director for the Southeastern Association and pastor of Pearl Church in New Albany, Ind., while Carolyn, his wife, works as a volunteer at the ministry.

the United States and Canada supported by Southern Baptists through the convention's Cooperative Program giving channel and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

The new missionaries include church planters, inner-city missions center directors, volunteer coordinators, state

convention staff, associational missionaries, catalytic missionaries for ethnic groups, and many other ministry roles.

Randy Singer, executive vice president for NAMB, reminded the congregation that the qualification for God's call on the lives of the missionaries is the same in at least one respect for every Christian.

"What qualifies you to be a missionary is that you are sinners saved by grace," he said. "The same thing that qualifies ... everyone in here to be a missionary — because we're either a missionary or a mission field."

"When you go out, it's not what you do for God that matters, it's what God does in your heart and through you," he added later. "The power of the call is the person of Jesus Christ."

Singer also reminded the church that the missionaries are being sent out by them and other churches across the country.

"This is a partnership. They are your mouth, and your hands, and your feet to go places that you could never go," he said. "They go to the inner city of places like Detroit, to student campuses all over Virginia, to rural areas in America that don't even have one evangelical church. They are to be, and you are to be, a vessel to bear his name."

The event was the first of six church-based commissioning services scheduled this year through the North American Mission Board. Other services will be in Alpharetta, Ga.; Sutton, W.Va.; Falls Creek, Okla.; Woodstock, Ga.; and Columbia, S.C.

Texas conservatives meet to discuss BGCT standing

PLANO, Texas (ABP) — Despite extensive media coverage beforehand, no formal action resulted from a meeting of about two dozen Texas Baptist pastors Feb. 28 in suburban Dallas to discuss their future relationship with the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT).

Secular media outlets across North Texas speculated that the gathering at Prestonwood Church in Plano would draw up to 300 pastors or that it was a meeting for Prestonwood members to vote to leave the BGCT. Neither report was true.

In reality, fewer than 30 pastors attended the by-invitation-only meeting convened by Prestonwood Pastor Jack Graham; Claude Thomas, pastor of First Church of Euless and chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee; and Ed Young, former SBC president and pastor of Second Church of Houston.

"We have no statement, no proposal, or pronouncement," Graham said at the conclusion of the three-and-a-half hour meeting. Rather, he described the meeting as a time of prayer and discussion about the options available to Texas Baptist churches that want to fully support the SBC and believe the BGCT is distancing itself from the national convention.

The small group of pastors included Stan Coffey, pastor of San Jacinto Church in Amarillo and president of the new Southern Baptists of Texas Convention formed in opposition to the BGCT. No representative of the BGCT was invited to attend, even though James Semple, director of the BGCT's State Missions Commission, called the church the morning of the meeting and volunteered to come hear the concerns of the pastors.

"We talked about what we believe matters most — world evangelization and missions

in Texas," Graham said after the meeting. "The common thread was support of the Southern Baptist Convention. As Southern Baptists living and ministering in Texas, how do we go about reaching our state?"

Asked if the group thought the BGCT was an ineffective means of reaching Texas, Graham responded that he believes there are "some philosophical differences about how we do church and missions."

The primary concern, he reiterated, is that the BGCT is not supportive enough of the SBC and its current conservative leadership, put in place after a 20-year battle for control of the denomination.

The SBC and its agencies and institutions are experiencing "success, success, success" in missions and evangelism, and the BGCT does not promote and highlight these successes, he said.

Graham is scheduled to nominate Georgia pastor James Merritt for the SBC's presidency during the annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., in June. Graham also has been rumored as a future presidential candidate.

Graham expressed displeasure with an earlier statement by BGCT President Clyde Glazener that the BGCT "won't be controlled by the SBC."

"I ask, what convention in all the world is controlled by the SBC?" Graham responded. "There's no other state convention saying this."

The pastors represented at the meeting — most of whom were unidentified and unavailable for comment — also shared concerns about the BGCT becoming a refuge for churches from outside Texas, he said.

BGCT Executive Director Charles Wade said since neither he nor any other BGCT leader was invited to the Prestonwood meeting, he could not comment on the issues raised there.

"We are open to discuss any matter of concern with any church affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas and to address those concerns as openly and honestly as possible," Wade said. "I am sure that before any church would decide to move away from the BGCT, they would want to have representatives from the convention visit with them and their churches."

"When a church leaves, it turns its back on the ministries which we mutually support — child-care homes, facilities for the elderly, hospitals, universities and academies, as well as efforts to reach and better the lives of thousands of Texans," he said.

Young admitted he and his church have not been involved much in the BGCT or its statewide ministries. Last year, Second Church gave no money to the Cooperative Program through the BGCT, according to the BGCT's published annual report. The megachurch did give \$7,400 in designated funds.

However, Young would not commit himself to the new Southern Baptists of Texas Convention any more than he committed to supporting the BGCT. "I'm just going to do my work and designate straight to the SBC," he said.

Though Prestonwood has the largest membership of any Baptist church in Texas, it traditionally has not been one of the convention's largest financial supporters. Last year, for example, the 15,000-member church with a \$23 million budget gave a total of \$12,575 through the BGCT.

First Church of Euless, meanwhile, recently voted to dually align with the BGCT and the new Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. Thomas said he couldn't remember how the church's missions giving would be divided.

Last year, First Church of Euless gave a total of \$396,445 through the BGCT.

Record set in '99 for new church starts

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — A record 1,747 new Southern Baptist congregations were added during 1999, according to a recent report compiled by the North American Mission Board. The previous record of 1,504 set in 1996.

Additionally, more than half of the congregations started were ethnic and African American — an indication of successful ongoing efforts to expand the Southern Baptist cultural base.

A record 675 of the churches were ethnic (non-African American) congregations, including 311 Hispanic, 32 Haitian, and 56 Korean. New African American congregations numbered 225.

The total number of new congregations included 154 existing churches that affiliated with Southern Baptists during the year.

States with the highest number of church plants for the year were Texas, 203; California, 184; Florida, 142; Louisiana, 79; and Indiana, with 72. States with the largest net increase in church plants from 1998 to 1999 were Missouri, with an increase of 54; Louisiana, 44; Florida, 23; Oklahoma, 22; and Indiana, 21.

Incorporation set for new Baptist Conv.

AUSTIN, Texas (BP) — The foundation has been laid for a new convention of Baptists to be based in Texas that encompass churches in North, Central, and South America, according to articles of incorporation filed in the Texas Secretary of State's office by a group of individuals who have been critical of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Articles of incorporation for "The Baptist Convention of the Americas" were filed Oct. 16, 1998, by Herbert H. Reynolds, identified in state documents as the new convention's registered agent. Also listed as members of the Baptist Convention of the Americas board of directors are John F. Baugh of Houston; W. Winfred Moore of Waco; and Paul W. Powell of Tyler.

NAMES IN THE NEWS



Port Gibson Church, Port Gibson, recently held deacon ordination service for Burnice Trevilion (first row, fourth from left). Chuck Terrell (second row, first from left) is pastor. Also pictured are the ordained men who took part in the service.

Goss Church, Columbia, ordained Mike Duncan as deacon on Feb. 27. David Laird is pastor.

Lisa Jones of Pelahatchie and a member of Robinhood Church, Brandon, recently returned from a medical mission trip to Honduras. Pictured with Jones is Don Nerren, pastor of Robinhood Church.

Ben H. Davis, 79, of Mobile, Ala., former minister, died Jan. 26. He served churches in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia for about 35

years. Churches he served in Mississippi include Hope, Philadelphia; Beulah, Decatur; Mt. Zion, O s y k a ; Fellowship, Summit; Jayess, Jayess; and Mars Hill, Summit. He and his wife Myrtle served as house parents at the

Alabama Children's Home for four years. Davis is survived by his wife; son, Terry Joe Davis; and one granddaughter.

First Church, Leakesville, ordained Cliff Hardin to the ministry. Hardin is presently on staff at First Church, Jackson, as pastoral care pastor. He is the son of Edwin and Jean Hardin of Leakesville. Pictured (from left) is Mack Strange, pastor of First Church, Leakesville presenting Hardin with a Bible.



Strange and Hardin

Ron Langston, former Zimbabwe missionary, has been named as associate director of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board's volunteers in missions department. Langston will coordinate volunteer ministries and recruitment for eastern, southern, and western Africa and help raise awareness of ministry opportunities in those areas and around the world. He is one of six regional associate directors in the department. Before coming

to the staff position at the board, Langston and his wife, Jan, were appointed as missionaries to Zimbabwe in 1983. They were the first missionaries to work with Venda-speaking nationals.

The Langstons transferred to Botswana in 1994 to work as church planters among the Kalanga people of Botswana and Zimbabwe. Born in Memphis, Tenn., and reared in Jonesboro,

Ark., Langston is graduate of Park College in Parkville, Mo., and New Orleans Seminary. Prior to missionary appointment, he served with the U.S. Air Force and as an operations manager for a building supply company. After serving as a summer missionary in Mississippi, he was pastor of Hopewell Church, Bude; associate pastor of Central Church, McComb; and pastor of Bowman Church, Lake City, Ark.

Correction

On page four of the March 9 edition of The Baptist Record, the wife of retiring Blue Mountain College president E. Harold Fisher was incorrectly identified. Her correct name is Martha Fisher. The Baptist Record regrets the error.

Their distinguished careers played to different tunes

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — One man held a state convention position that often meant filling multiple positions simultaneously. Another served churches bivocationally throughout his ministry career. A third served one church for 33 years.

What W.A. Bradshaw, James McCaleb, and Bill James share is a gratitude for the training at Southwestern Seminary that helped shape their ministries.

After fulfilling a lifetime of

faithful ministry, each was honored as a distinguished alumnus during the annual Southwestern school of church music award luncheon Feb. 18 at University Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

Bradshaw was called to music ministry in 1955 and had originally planned to attend another seminary. God had other plans for the native Louisianan, however, so Bradshaw and his wife, Shirley, came west instead of south. Earning his master of music from Southwestern in 1965, Bradshaw served as a music minister in five states until 1981. At that time, he began serving with the Baptist Convention of New Mexico, often filling five positions at once under the official title of director of music and student ministries.

Bradshaw is still active even after his retirement Jan. 31. He has been serving as minister of music with First Church, Rio Rancho, N.M., since 1997.

McCaleb, a native of Tennessee, used one form of service to assist in his service to the kingdom. McCaleb served in the South Pacific in World War II before returning to gain his bachelor's degree from Mississippi College in 1949 and

a bachelor of music and master of religious education from Southwestern in 1953.

In 1956, he rejoined the Air Force, and began serving as a music director in Colorado while serving the nation in Wyoming. Through his retirement in 1973, he worked for the country and the kingdom simultaneously.

That career as a bivocational minister of music placed a passion in McCaleb's life for those who serve in similar church situations.

That passion led to the publication of "Church Music RFD," a volume for bivocational music leaders.

McCaleb also established a trust to fund music workshops for bivocational music ministers.

McCaleb, like Bradshaw, is not taking retirement easy. "I'll retire when Satan retires," McCaleb said.

For James, God's call to music ministry meant a lifetime with a single community of faith. James recently retired after 33 years of service with Wilshire Church in Dallas.

While at Wilshire, James led a music program for all ages, with 400 to 500 participants.

While James' main service has been to Wilshire, it has not been his only imprint on music ministry in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Since his retirement, James is helping to coordinate the recording of a new children's choir book.



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI — Southwestern Seminary's School of Church Music honored three distinguished alumni Friday, Feb. 18, at University Church in Fort Worth. They are (from left) W.A. Bradshaw, James L. McCaleb, and William H. "Bill" James. (BP photo by Bryan Murley)

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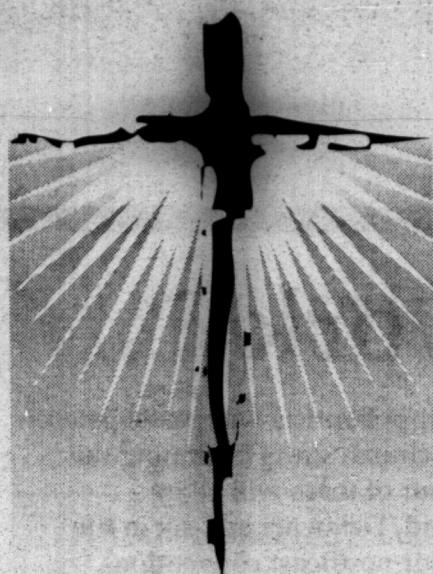


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MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST

Partnership Missions

SPRING QUARTER 2000



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God reveals bridge plan through a vision

By Archie & Virginia Crawford

PURPOSE:
TO PROVIDE AN
OPPORTUNITY FOR
VOLUNTEERS
TO USE THEIR SKILLS
TO WITNESS FOR CHRIST
THROUGH MISSION
PARTNERSHIPS.

Our first team of the year 2000 (Higginbotham team from Ala.) arrived during the 8th consecutive day of rain for Honduras. The work site here in La Ceiba is on the side of a mountain and when it rains, the road there is impassable.

We started looking for a place and a need elsewhere for this team. As we worried, our housekeeper, who is a pastor's wife, assured us that God would place this team just where he wanted them. After even the 4x4 Toyota could not make it to the work site, we headed to El Porvenir where the pastor's house was in construction.

Arriving, we found that the pastor had been praying for someone to come help him finish his house. While we surveyed the work needed, we discussed a real

need for a bridge over the sewage canal that separated the two communities and the church from the new construction site where we had built 30 houses recently for the homeless.

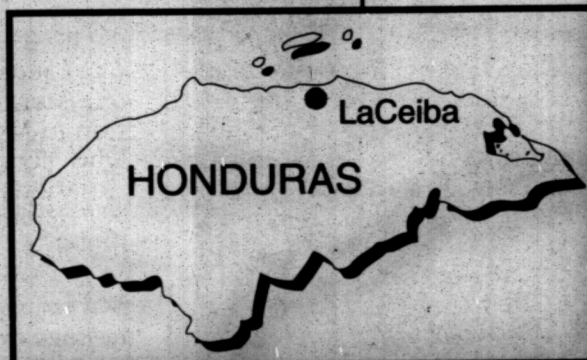
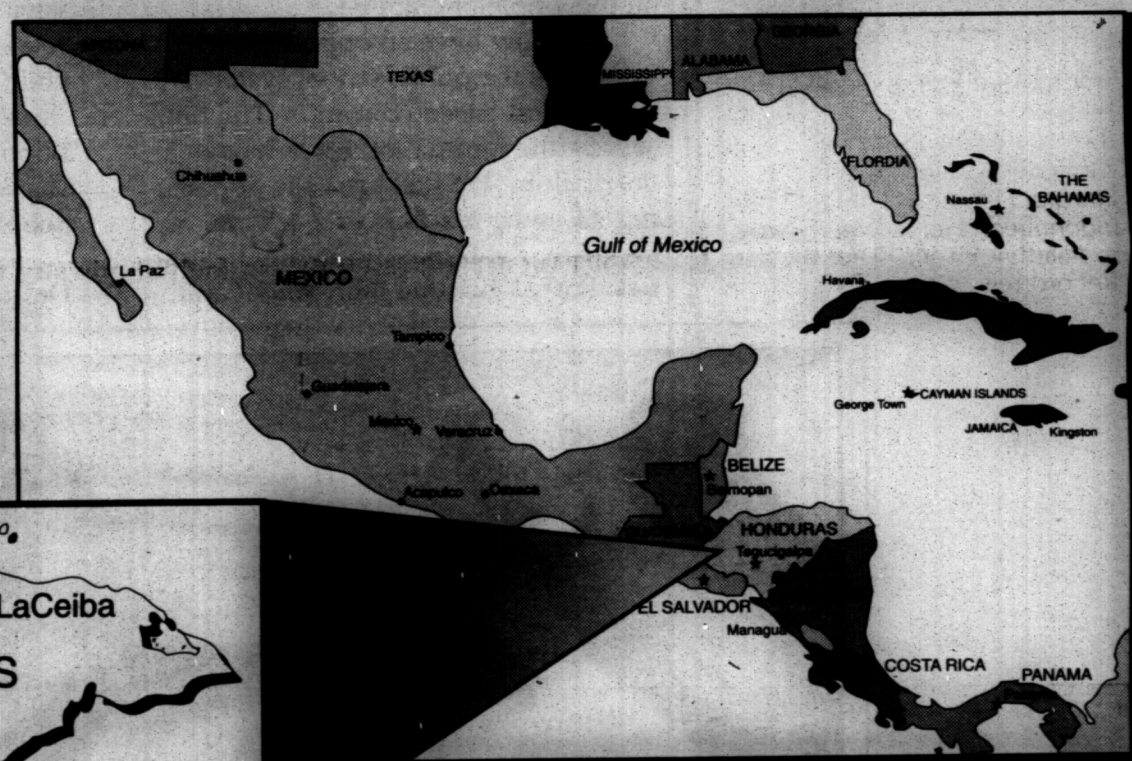
A wave of excitement ran

through the team as they thought of ways to build this bridge. During that second night in Honduras, one of the men said

he was awakened in the night with a vision of how it could be done.

The following day we were amazed that they purchased the materials and built this bridge in one day. There was a time of rejoicing for the

This team had their work cut out for them, because with all the rain, the foundation had not even been laid. When they arrived, they started laying out the building and used picks to dig the ditches for the foundation. Thank God that it didn't



E.C. Harpe (front, right) gives the key to a new house to a pastor at La Ceiba. The group from First Church, Richland, built the house last year.

communities as they thanked God for this connection. The pastor rejoiced as he told us of the ministry opportunities that this would open up for the church.

The remainder of the week was spent working on the pastor's house. We didn't get it finished, but the team felt that they had done exactly what God sent them here to do: build the bridge.

Our second team (Haymon team from La.) who stayed for two weeks, went to Barranco Chele to build a much needed church. Barranco Chele is a new community where we (TriState Partnership) have built 26 houses, but when they finish there, it will have 80 houses.

rain (except for an occasional shower) during the two weeks!

This team fought against many obstacles and worked hard to put the block walls up and the roof on. As we talked to the Hondurans, they were amazed that this team did all of this in just two weeks' time. Many times, it takes that long just to get the materials delivered. This team saw every phase of the construction and did it Honduran-style.

The Crawfords are partnership coordinators for Honduras North Coast. Archie and Virginia Crawford Col. Naranjal Calle Roatan Casa 14 La Ceiba, Atlantida, Honduras Phone: 011-504-443-4093 E-mail: crawford@caribe.hn

PM

On mission - God at work

To make a difference in our six partnerships:

- We must be a people of prayer.
 - We must be a people who go.
 - We must be a people who give.
- Paul Harrell

The first year of a new missions partnership is like the first day of Vacation Bible School. You just have to get through it. The second day, as is the second year, you settle in to do meaningful and significant work for our Lord.

It is a time of spiritual enrichment to observe God at work in significant ways. In Ukraine, Mississippi Baptists are initiating steps to start nine new churches in the Odessa Oblast. An oblast is a political subdivision similar to our states. Ukrainian church planters have been assigned to those nine starts. Each of the nine areas in our state has a church start team of six persons scheduled to go to the Odessa Oblast this year. It is our objective to begin a "church planting movement" in the whole of Ukraine.

We now have an opportunity to penetrate the public school system with moral-based education. The Bible will be the foundation for this new curriculum. We will have the opportunity to equip teachers to teach creationism, the Bible, and family life values. Forty Christian high school and

college students will minister to 4,000 Ukrainian youth in a camp this summer. This is an opportunity for these youth to share and demonstrate moral-based education and training. Such opportunities are evidence of God at work in Ukraine.

God is at work in Honduras. This year the first lady of Honduras has opened the door for our medical/dental teams to go into the public schools and establish a health card on each student. By doing this we have the opportunity to witness, distribute Bibles, and conduct evangelistic services at night to include parents. This ministry will allow us to relate to 290,000 school children during these next three years. What an opportunity to be in the partnership of sharing the gospel with thousands of people.

God is at work in Maryland/Delaware, the Northeast, and Boston.

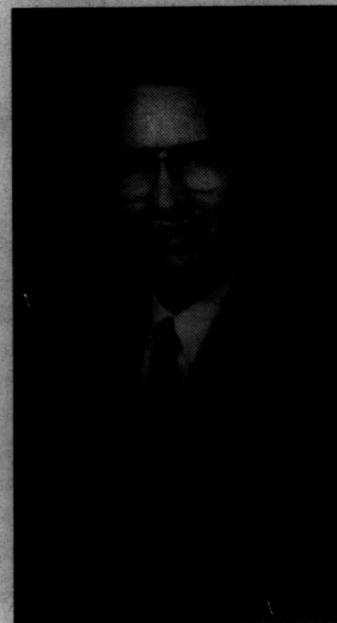
Mississippi Baptists will participate in 10 new church starts beginning this year. Four of these will be in Maryland/Delaware and six in the other four northeast conventions. Individuals, churches, and associa-

tions will have the opportunity to provide many evangelistic outreach activities. This sector of our country contains 25% of our nation's population. God is giving Mississippi Baptists an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people who live in the northeast.

To make a difference in our six partnerships:

- We must be a people of prayer.
- We must be a people who go.
- We must be a people who give.

Please know that the Partnership Missions Department is willing to assist anyone who is seeking to be on mission for our Lord.



Missions includes more than just "going"

You can be a missionary for a week if you are able to travel to one of Mississippi Baptists' partnership areas. If you cannot do that, you can still support the ministry with prayer, financial aid, used eyeglasses, Bible school materials, Bibles and other items. Beginning this year, each Partnership volunteer will be given five prayer bracelets to pass on to supporters for wearing prior to and during the mission trip. If God has moved your heart toward missions, ask him to lead you concerning your support of this work.

Maryland men's rally a first

By Kenny Heath, associational missionary
Western Baptist Association, La Vale, Md.

Sometimes, God blesses us through our partnerships, not through planned actions, but by just being together. Back in late November, I got the opportunity to visit with the three associations in Mississippi partnered with us—Kemper, Winston, and Mississippi. While with Alton Foster and the good folks in the Mississippi Association, I had the privilege of being part of their quarterly Baptist Men's rally.

Following a fantastic barbecue chicken dinner provided by the men of Liberty Church, Liberty, we gathered to hear an inspiring message from Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. I was astounded at the turnout—100 men from teens to 80-year-olds, and were they ever fired up for missions. After I shared for a few minutes about what God was doing in Western Maryland and West Virginia, I think they would have loaded up the bus to come help us if we had one in the parking lot.

Two weeks later, back home in Maryland, I shared this experience with several men as they set up La Vale Baptist Church's live nativity. A week later, I received an invitation to share what I had seen and heard with a meeting of Baptist Men from all of our 19 churches. Now, understand that only La Vale and perhaps one or two of our other churches have any kind of Baptist Men's group.

The La Vale men felt led of the Lord to invite all of our association's men to come to their meeting to hear what God is doing among Mississippi Association's men, and to seek what he would want to do through our men to reach lost people for Christ. They would even provide a continental breakfast, which has since been upgraded to a full breakfast. So, all of a sudden, on Feb. 19, we had our first perhaps ever, associational Baptist Men's rally. See what God is doing through our partnership, even when we're just fellowshipping.

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PM

Many Ukraninans still open to Gospel

by Dale and Kimberly Ledbetter, Ukraine
Resident missionaries in Odessa

After completing seminary and pastoral work for three years in Dickson, Tenn., the Lord led Dale and Kimberly Ledbetter to consider full-time missions service.

Dale visited Ukraine on a short-term volunteer mission trip in the Spring of 1993 and returned home to begin the journey toward career appointment with the International Mission Board.

The couple was appointed at the 1994 Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando and arrived in Kiev, Ukraine, in October of that year to begin language study.

Dale recalls the first few years as being difficult. Goods were hard to come by and irregular at best. Language study was difficult and Kimberly gave birth to their second child in November 1995, shortly after completing basic language study.

"We arrived in Odessa on Jan. 1, 1996, in the midst of the worst recorded winter in 70 years," said Dale. "The snow stayed on the ground for three months and the temperatures plummeted to the teens for three straight weeks. We survived, however, and with God's grace, began to make contacts in the area.

"Thankfully, God saw fit to place us alongside Vladimir Shemchishin who is the senior pastor in the region. His vision and desire to evangelize, start churches, and train leaders is exemplary," said Dale, who noted that the region has seen 35 new churches started in a four-year period.

Dale has been teaching basic courses in evangelism, church planting, and expository preaching at Odessa International Theological Seminary. He also took part in two church plants: in the city of Kotovsk and the village of Nezerkah.

Kimberly has been busy with children, but has found time to lead several women's groups in *Experiencing God*, an effective evangelism tool.

Said Dale, "We are challenged every day with a changing culture...many are still open to the gospel and it is our desire for many to come to know our Lord. Your prayers are not only welcomed, but necessary."

The Ledbetters' three children are Logan James, born in 1991; Caleb Lively, 1995; and Megan Joy, 1998.

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Missionary Profile

We arrived in Odessa...in the midst of the worst recorded winter in 70 years!

-Dale Ledbetter



Van Dyess of Jackson (at left with whistle) traveled to Odessa, Ukraine, last year to help lead a Vacation Bible School. He said, "We made a visit to a local church to conduct a two-hour Bible school. Most of the children were unchurched. I believe this was probably the greatest blessing I have ever received. The spirit of God was overwhelming. The people, adults and children, greeted us with a love that you just can't describe. Their faith in God was tremendous. I felt somewhat unworthy to even be there. I praise God for the privilege to serve him and be a part of his kingdom. My prayer is that I can return someday soon."

Honduran medical clinic completed

by Jim and Jane Baldwin, fieldside coordinators, Honduras

We have just completed a dynamic medical clinic involving the "Central Salud," the government health department, who also helped us in our clinic. I do not have the time to go into a great detail, other than saying it was marvelously successful.

I believe Christ was portrayed in three ways: the Good News of his resurrection and salvation, using his methods of healing, and leaving the village with a more lifelike example of what Christ was like.

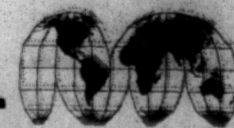
I hope and pray that more of our teams commit to this direct approach of carrying the Gospel to the young people of Honduras. We even had 145 of 145 children in one class come to know the Lord in the Escuela Jose T. Reyes in Yarumela, La Paz Dept.

Pastor Armando Meza, who many people have come to know and love, has dedicated himself to our ever-increasing effort. I sincerely believe our efforts will be revealed in the way school kids progress through school and their own personal lives, even affecting their own friends and family and teachers.

Jim and Jane Baldwin, Calle 8, Casa 152, Colonia Miramonte, Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Phone: 011-504-232-1761 (O), 011-504-235-8080 (H); E-mail: mbdh@david.intertel.hn



Ukrainian Baptist, witnesses during a community worship service in suburban Odessa to a woman who attended the service. Tracts, written by Gene Gillis, pastor of Cleary Church, Florence, were handed out to those who requested them.



PM

Partnership Mission projects for 2000

UKRAINE PRAYER NEEDS

Tom and June Nolen, volunteer coordinators for Partnership Missions in Ukraine, sent this listing of prayer needs.

1. **Ukraine - 1999-2004 - 6 years** *Cost: \$1,315*
 Projects: Crusades Prayerwalks
 Bible Schools Bible studies
 Construction Evangelistic outreach
 Gospel supper
2. **Honduras - Ongoing** *Cost: \$875*
 Projects: Construction Medical/Dental
 Evangelistic outreach
3. **Maryland/Delaware - 1999-2004 - 6 years** *Cost: Determined by team.*
 Projects: New church starts Leadership development
 Church revitalization Evangelistic outreach
4. **Impact Northeast - 2000-2007 - 8 years** *Cost: Determined by team.*
 Projects: New church starts Student/campus initiatives
 Church revitalization Leadership development
5. **Boston - NAMB - Focus city - 2000-2002 - 3 years** *Cost: Determined by the team*
 Projects: Surveys Relationship development
 Bible schools Evangelistic outreach
 Prayerwalks
6. **Last Frontier - Ongoing** *Cost: To be determined*
 Projects: Prayer support linkages Prayerwalks
 Evangelistic outreach

How can you be involved in Partnership Missions?

1. **You can pray.**
 - Form prayer support groups.
 - Adopt a specific missionary to support with prayer.
 - Provide prayer support for a specific partnership project.
 - Select an unreached people group for which to pray.
2. **You can go on a Partnership project.**
 - Be exposed to another culture in need of the gospel.
 - Experience the excitement of being on mission in an area of your choosing.
 - See God at work in other parts of our country and world.
3. **You can give of your resources.**
 - Fund specific mission projects.
 - Make it possible for others to go and have a mission experience.
 - Support individual ministries.
 - Help provide a new church start.

1. We ask prayer for the church of Fontanka. Two weeks ago we went there to start a course in *Experiencing God*. It is an exciting church with lots of young people who have not yet repented but are interested in the Bible. The church meets in a house, and it had around 60 people there when we attended. Today, the pastor called to tell me that the road in front of the church slid down into the ocean and the church was so badly damaged that no one could enter it. This church was on a cliff overlooking the Black Sea with a beautiful view. There is no money and no place to meet.
2. We ask prayer for the children at Nova Alchonka where we meet every Sunday in the street to teach Bible school. We still have around 25-30 every week. We plan to invite their mothers on Mother's Day to see the children and hear them sing. Pray God will work in the lives of these adults that need Jesus. Pray that we will find a building to meet in.
3. We ask prayer for the church at Kotovka, which has stopped building because of lack of funds and bad weather. Also, pray for the pastor and his wife to receive encouragement.
4. Please pray that God will call out special people for the teams this year—God-led people.
5. Pray for help for us in this overwhelming undertaking. Eighteen teams have already signed up. Pray for the necessary translators, drivers, and helpers.
6. Pray for us to have energy and good health. We are humbled that God would allow us to be a part of his work here in Ukraine.
7. Pray for our families to stay God-centered, God-focused.
8. Pray for our grandchildren to grow in the Lord.
9. We praise him for prayers and support from all of you.
10. We praise him for health, safety, energy and help for our duties at this time.
11. We praise him for our translator, Victor.
12. We praise him for allowing us to be a part of his work here.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." (Isa. 26:3)

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JUST FOR THE RECORD

Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames will be presented at Northcrest Church, Meridian, March 19-21 at 7 p.m. For additional information, call (601) 482-3498.

Escatawpa Church, Escatawpa, will be sending volunteer missionaries to Brazil on March 23-April 2. They will be constructing a church building in the city of Riacho Frio in south Piaui. The

volunteers that will be going are Ben Benjamin, Shelly Dufrene, Dennis Griffin, Greg Johnston, Jim McEachern, Lloyd Oliver III, Mark Toomer, Debbie Weaver, John Weaver, Lynn Chandler, Steve Goff, Britt Johnston, Shelia Mccrory, Troy Smith, Vye Toomer, and Lloyd Oliver Jr.

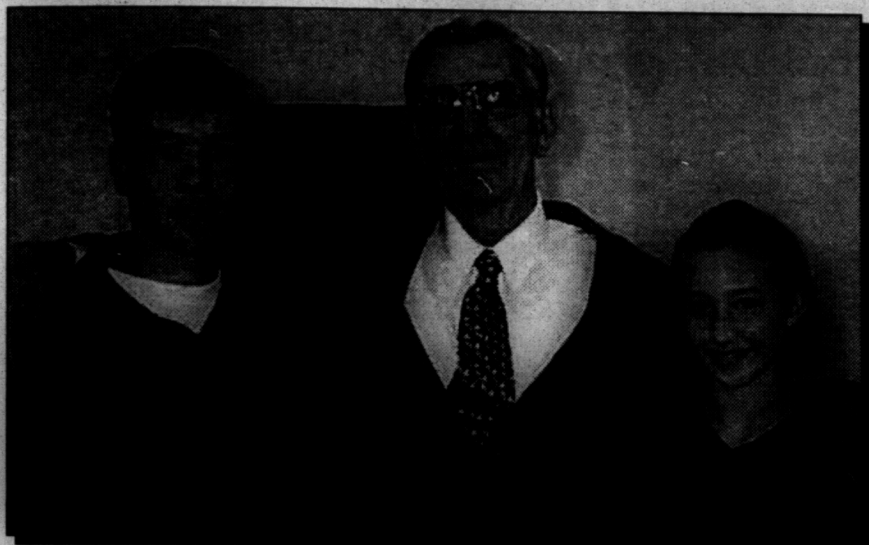
Life's Choices, a drama about the reality of life, will be presented by the youth department at Hurricane Creek Church, Sandy Hook, 6-9 p.m., March 31, April 1, 7 and 8. For more information or for group reservations, call (601) 736-9838, 736-9027, or 736-1927.

Alta Woods Church, Jackson, will present Mac McConnell in a one man multi-character drama, "What About You?" The presentation paints a mural of passion week, giving unique insight to the most famous trial of all times, as history leaps to life through the intense character of Simon Peter. It will be held in the sanctuary on April 19 at 7 p.m. For more information, call (601) 372-8651.



Wallerville Church, Union County Association

Wallerville Church, Union County Association, celebrated a note burning on Jan. 30 for its Family Life Center. Taking part in the ceremony (pictured, from left) are Doug Jordan; Shelia Bailey; Raymond Alexander; Gary Crowell, interim pastor; Travis Carr; Paul Nunnelee; Duncan Gates; David Rowan; and Greg Richey. Other activities during the ceremony were the youth and drama team, children's group, children's Bible drillers and Bible buddies; and men's quartet.



Coila Church, Carroll Association, held baptism services on Feb. 27. The church recently installed a baptistry, and this was the first baptism to ever be performed within the church building. In past years, baptisms were performed using the facilities of neighboring churches — Black Hawk, Mount Olive, and North Carrollton. Prior to that, baptisms were done in Coila Creek. Baptized at Coila Church were Jason Woods and Stephanie Mitchell. They are pictured with Billy Blakely, pastor.

Henry offers vision for ERLC Research Institute

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Well-known evangelical scholar Carl F.H. Henry reissued his decades-old call for the church to "confront the culture with the message of the Bible," in opening the inaugural meeting of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's (ERLC) Research Institute Feb. 17. The Institute will advise and assist the ERLC in developing strategies and resources that bring biblical truth to bear on moral and public policy issues.

Henry, founding editor of Christianity Today, warned in his classic text, "The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism," in 1947 that when evangelicals withdraw

from the public square, others whose message is antithetical to Scripture rush to fill the void.

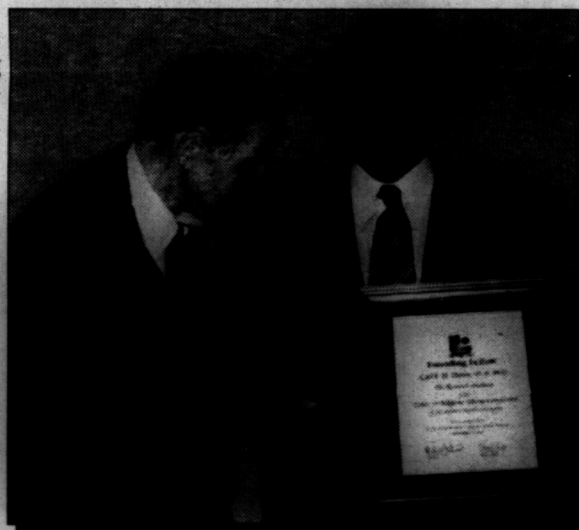
"Instead of total disengagement from the culture, Christians should challenge it," Henry offered to the Institute's founding fellows, noting an absence of godly moral influence upon the culture has had direct theological, social and political consequences.

"What has happened to America as moral guardian of the nations?" he asked, saying, "The time has come for America again to exhibit to the world the moral leadership and integrity that exhibits and commends ethical democracy to the world."

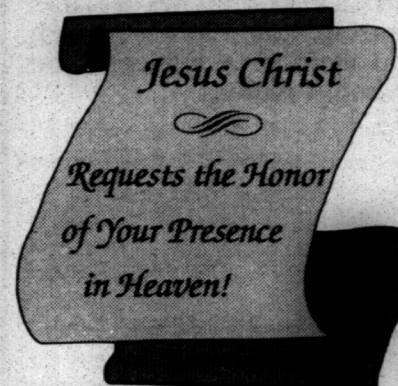
In introducing Henry, ERLC President Richard Land said evangelicals "owed Dr. Henry a tremendous and incalculable debt of gratitude" for his "strong and uncompromising stance and his willingness to apply academic rigors to the issues that have been so seminal in the last half of the 20th century." Land saluted the 87-year-old Henry for "vigorously blowing on the embers of the reformation trying to keep the glow alive."

Henry called for evangelicals to become personally involved in evangelism and to encourage young people to enter into key vocations so they "can serve and give the

leadership that we need" in the broader culture, and "beyond that, daily devotions in the Book."



INSTITUTE INAUGURATED— SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission President Richard Land (right) introduces famed evangelical scholar Carl F.H. Henry as a founding fellow of the ERLC's Research Institute during the Institute's first meeting Feb. 17.



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. *(I have sinned.)*
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. *(I repent.)*
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. *(I believe in Jesus.)*
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. *(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)*

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

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REVIVAL DATES

Calvary, Durant: youth revival; March 16-18; services will begin at 7 p.m. nightly; Daniel Blaylock, leading the music and bringing messages; Willie Bishop, pastor.

Holcomb (North Central): youth revival; March 17-19; Friday, 7 p.m.; Saturday, 7 p.m. and Glass concert, 8 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Ricky Wheat, North Greenwood Church, preaching; David Lewis, music; Randy Ashley, pastor.

Friendship, McComb: March 17-19; Friday and Saturday, 7 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Friday, Justin Howell, Magnolia, evangelist; Saturday, Perry McCall, church planter, New Orleans, La., evangelist; Sunday, Ted Bowlin, McComb, evangelist, morning services; Greg Warnock, Brookhaven, evangelist, evening services; Bradley White, Tylertown, music; LaVerne Summerlin, pastor.

Kilmichael, Kilmichael: March 19-22; Sunday, 11 a.m., noon meal, and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., noon-day service, lunch, and 7 p.m. Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, evangelist; Rick Patrick, Durant, worship leader; David Bishop, pastor.

Crowder, Crowder: March 19-22; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Randy Von Kanel, Tupelo, evangelist; Joe Meurrier, music; Ben James, pastor.

Siloam (Golden Triangle): March 26-29; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Marty Steelmon, West Point, evangelist; Barry Bouchillon, West Point, music; Walter Simmons, pastor.

Lowrey Memorial, Blue Mountain: March 19-22; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Steve Wilson, Brandon, evangelist; Jim and Carol Pinkston, Corinth, worship leaders; Ronald Meeks, interim pastor.

Mt. Carmel, Edinburg: March 17-19; 7 p.m.; Hugh Martin, Philadelphia, evangelist; Mike Rives, music; Keith Fulton, pastor.

Harmony, Brookhaven: April 16-19; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Billy Howse, Brookhaven, evangelist; Nick Davis, Brookhaven, guest pianist; Melissa Eldridge, special music coordinator; Clarence Young, interim pastor.

Alta Woods, Jackson: March 19-22; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Lannie Wilbourn, evangelist; Lewis Oswalt, music; Frank H. Thomas, pastor.

Goss, Columbia: March 19-24; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Mike Grenn, Columbia, evangelist; Wade Lott, Columbia, music; David Laird, pastor.

Union (Smith): March 19-22; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Clyde Little, Bay Springs, evangelist; Keith Ballard, Union Church, music; Robert Perry interim pastor.

Farmhaven, Canton: March 24-26; Fri., 7 p.m.; Saturday, 7 p.m.; Sunday, 10:45 a.m., noon luncheon, and 6 p.m.; Les Hughes, Clinton, evangelist; Mike Donovan, Clinton, music; Charles Gentry, pastor.

Homecoming

Calvary, Durant: April 2; old fashioned day; New Vision, Philadelphia, singing from 10-11 a.m.; Billy Barron, message during the 11 a.m. worship hour; lunch served; and afternoon activities. Willie Bishop is pastor.

BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS



Evan Lenow, of Memphis, Tenn., a senior majoring in communications at Mississippi College is the recipient of the sixth annual Byrd Memorial Preaching Award. The recipient is chosen on the basis of Biblical and theological insight, creativity, structure, and style. He is the son of Ed and Margaret Ann Evans Lenow. Pictured (from left) are Harold Bryson, professor, Christian Studies; Lenow; Margaret Ann Evans Lenow; Rosie Byrd; Charlotte Byrd; and Harrell N. Byrd.

State now has five Christian Women Job Corps sites

Tammy Anderson, consultant for special ministries for the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), announced recently that there are now five Christian Women Job Corps (CWJC) sites up and running in Mississippi.

Anderson said that recent mission program material focused on CWJC, suggesting that local Women on Mission, Girl's Auxiliary, and Acteen groups could partner with CWJC sites for mission projects. However, the national literature did not have names or contact numbers for the five sites in Mississippi, Anderson pointed out. As a result, some Mississippi churches have been looking to go out of state for a mission project that could be accomplished at home.

CWJC is a ministry of WMU designed to provide a Christian context in which women in need are equipped for life and employment. After five pilot

programs were evaluated during 1996, CWJC official began as a ministry of WMU on March 1, 1997. Today there are 130 CWJC sites in 33 states. Plans are also

underway for international site development.

The first Mississippi site was started in Tupelo in 1998. The fifth site in Metro Association began this spring. Anderson anticipates two more sites to open during the year.

For more information about the Mississippi

CWJC, contact the coordinators listed below, or contact Anderson at P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone (601) 292-3323, or toll-free outside of Jackson (800) 748-1651.

1. Northeast Mississippi CWJC, P. O. Box 7116, Tupelo, MS 38802. (662) 566-8507. Contact person: Julie Busby

2. Oktibbeha County CWJC, 403-A Russell Street, Starkville, MS 39759 (662) 324-6020

3. CWJC of Broken Wings Ministries, P. O. Box 784, Ackerman, MS 39735 (662) 285-6296. Contact person: Donna Oswalt

4. Great Holmes County CWJC, Grace Community Church, P. O. Box 280, Tchula,

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Brett Harvey, from Byram and a junior at Mississippi College (MC), captured the Top Parliamentary Debate Speaker Award at the Pi Kappa Delta National Honoraries Speech Tournament in St. Louis, Mo., Feb. 26-28. Sonya Dickens, from Seminary and a senior at MC, paired with Harvey to capture a place in the semi-finals of the tournament.

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NOT SYNONYMOUS

Editor:

I read the brief letter from D. V. Sparks in a recent issue of The Baptist Record regarding The Baptist Record's front-page coverage of the inauguration of Gov. Musgrove. An excerpt is, "It was misleading for him to preach no negative campaigning and then do so much negative sound bites." He also mentions "that is relative to another Democrat we have in the White House and he is a Southern Baptist."

Sparks has been working with people long enough to realize that Southern Baptist is not synonymous to Democrat, nor to negative campaigning. It is not even synonymous to Christian. Even if the Governor

"preached" no negative campaigning and did so, it is not synonymous to Southern Baptist.

James K. Burke
Waynesboro

MEMBERS SOUGHT

Editor:

My name is Gail Bridgwood and I belong to Seacoast Community Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I am chairperson of our church's 40th anniversary celebration committee.

I am writing to ask your help in finding some of our former members. Our church was established some 40 years ago by a group of military families who had been transferred to Pease A.F.B. When they arrived, they

could find no Southern Baptist church so with the help of the Home Mission Board, they started the very first Southern Baptist work in all of New England. Through the years, many military folks passed through our doors and now we would like to find them if possible. Approximately a year ago we underwent a name change so many former members will not recognize our new name. The church was formerly known as Screven Memorial Baptist Church.

The anniversary celebration is taking place July 19-23, 2000 at our church in Portsmouth. Folks can contact the church at 397 Lafayette Road, Portsmouth, NH 03801 by snail mail. They can also contact me at the following e-mail address, wgbridgwood@ttlc.net. Thank you for helping us.

Gail Bridgwood
Portsmouth, NH

SHILOH THRIVING

Editor:

I am a member of Shiloh Church, Calhoun County, where I serve as pianist and assistant clerk. I am writing to let you know about the great things that God is doing in our church.

In December we had High Attendance Day for Sunday School and there were 106% with a large attendance for worship service also. Between December and January, 12 people were saved and baptism service was held January 30 with 91 in Sunday School and over 200 in attendance for worship service. Four people

were added by letter and other decisions were made during that time also. Praise the Lord!

Our Lottie Moon goal was exceeded, Brotherhood has been started and our WMU attendance is up. The youth are also planning to start a mime ministry.

In January, John Hearn began serving as our interim pastor and we are delighted to have him and his wife Barbara here with us.

We pray that our "unplanned revival" continues and may all the glory and honor be given to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for he is worthy to be praised!

Diana Childs
Big Creek

SEND YOUTH TO ORLANDO

Editor:

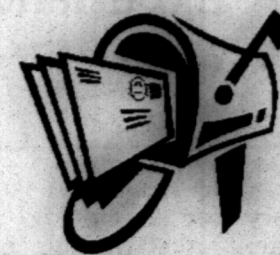
In just a few weeks now, June 13-14, the Southern Baptist Convention will convene in Orlando, Florida. This year's Convention theme is Partners in the Worldwide Harvest.

We are asking each church to consider the possibility of electing one interested spiritually-minded teenager as a messenger to this year's Convention in an effort to begin the passing of the torch to a younger generation.

Therefore, please plan to ask your church if you can be a messenger now.

We will see you in Orlando with the world on our hearts and the hope of Christ held before us.

Paige Patterson, president
Southern Baptist Conv.
Wake Forest, NC



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

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Experiencing victory

Joshua 6:16-20; 7:5; 8:26-30

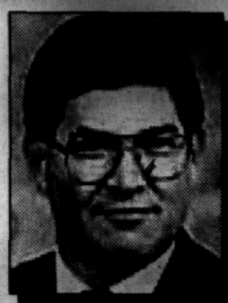
By Keith Smyser

How do we obtain victory? Victory for some can mean meeting sales quotas, hitting home runs, winning primaries, hitting a golf ball straight, getting a raise, or getting a promotion. However, in this week's lesson we will learn that God's way to victory is obedience!

Obedience brings victory (6:16-20). God used an unusual plan to defeat Jericho. If God calls us to do something, he will also tell us how to do it. From a human perspective, God's plan may seem strange, but the plan will work if it is obeyed by faith (Isaiah 55:8-11). Each day the Israelites followed God's plan. The action of

marching around Jericho in silence continued for six days. Can you imagine the tension level inside Jericho?

Joshua explained to the people about "the things under the ban." We learn that only Rahab and her family were to be spared. All the spoils of war, including human life, belonged to the Lord. Two reasons God commanded the utter destruction of Canaan's population: (1) to punish Canaan's inhabitants for their wickedness (Lev. 18:24-25), and (2) to protect his people from the temptations to adopt the Canaanites' wicked practices (Deut. 20:17-18). Joshua even noted that one person could affect the entire nation (6:18).



Smyser

On the seventh day the procession marched around the city seven times, then the priests blew the shophar, a ram's horn. Joshua's words must have been so exciting to people as he said "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city!" The walls came down and God enabled the people to take the city. God blessed the people of Israel! He can bless you when you are faithful to obey him in all that he asks!

Disobedience brings defeat (7:5). So often in life, after a great victory a defeat can come quickly! Perhaps the spies were a little cocky, presumptuous, or even overconfident. The spies told Joshua, "just send two or three thousand men to take Ai for it will not be difficult to defeat them."

Achan valued the spoils of war more than obedience to God. Achan violated Joshua's specific instructions (6:17-19)

costing the Israelites the lives of thirty-six men! The people's hearts melted and Israel was totally demoralized.

Did you notice that scripture never indicated that anyone, not even Joshua, inquired of the Lord before the battle in which they were defeated? (Joshua makes the same mistake in Joshua 9:14 with the Gibeonites.) Had Joshua and Israel placed their confidence in their military strength?

What can we learn? First, we never sin alone. Achan's sin brought defeat to all of Israel. Second, sin cannot be hidden forever. While the stoning of Achan may seem severe, Achan knew the rules. Third, we cannot experience victory if we are disobedient. The Jews raised another heap of stones to serve as a reminder of the trouble sin causes (7:26).

Victory leads to worship (8:26-30). God gave Joshua instructions that were to be followed to the letter. Joshua used

an ambush against Ai. God gave instructions regarding the plunder taken from the city (8:2, 27) that was different from those given regarding Jericho (6:17, 21). It is ironic, had Achan waited, he could have taken all the spoils he desired. When we run ahead of God, we can miss blessings (Matt. 6:33)!

Joshua followed God's directives completely even if some actions seemed gruesome (8:28). Joshua was careful to follow teachings found in Deuteronomy 21:22-23.

It was time to celebrate the victory God had given. Joshua led the people to build an altar on Mount Ebal. When we experience victory God has given, it should inspire us to worship him! God gives Christians victories over sin and death. The results of those victories should move us to a greater level of commitment to our Lord! Do you have reason to celebrate?

Smyser is associate pastor of First Church, Starkville.

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Threat to harmony

1 Corinthians 3:4-4:13

By Neel Grantham

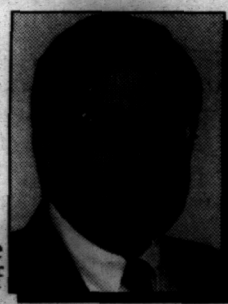
In our study of chapter one, we eluded to the pride problem of the Corinthian church. Because there were divisions, Paul called the church worldly, acting like mere men. He went on to explain that we are all on the same team. We all have different roles at times as we reach out to the lost. Some plant the seed, others water it, but Paul gave God the glory and the credit for making it grow.

In 3:18, Paul wants the church to see the futility of pride. Being wise by the standards of this age is nothing to brag about. He again uses the word foolishness. Refer back to

1:18 and 2:14. In those verses the things of God are foolishness to the world. In 3:19 it is the wisdom of the world he describes as foolishness. That is why in all things we must rely on God.

Paul finally said in v. 21 to stop finding glory in men. It is not about men, but about God.

Who's judge? (4:1-5). Paul apparently suffered unjust judgment by some in the church. I don't think he really cared what they thought. He didn't even judge himself. Paul knew he was justified in Christ and that the Lord's judgment was all that really mattered. God would "bring to light the hidden things of dark-



Grantham

ness." He alone will judge our hearts. The way we should look at our church leaders and one another is not through judgmental eyes, but as fellow workers. "Ministers of Christ" can also be rendered "servants of Christ." As servants we work together. Let us strive for that servant's heart. Instead of judging our church leaders, let's pray for them and work side by side. That will certainly leave little time for criticizing and lessen the threat to harmony. Who is the judge? Only God.

Who's superior? (4:6-7). Paul uses himself and Apollos as examples of fellow workers. One was not superior over the other. God was using them both. We have all been gifted by God. Our abilities and strengths are from God. So where is the boasting coming from? It is from selfish pride wanting to

make ourselves more than we really are. The only boasting should be about how awesome our God is and in what He is doing. The roles God uses us in and the gifts God gives us may be different. But all are important as we will see in Chapter 12. Who is superior? Only God.

Who's honored? (4:8-13). Paul certainly felt that the apostles weren't. He pointed out to the church that they acted as kings. Again, this is from the worldly view of royalty. They saw themselves as more than they should. Paul really wanted them to see the true royalty that was theirs in Christ. Then he could share in that with them.

Instead, he laid out the scene for them as he saw it. The apostles were last in the procession of the church. They were a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. They were fools, weak and despised. He pointed out the Corinthians

self-appointed wisdom in Christ, as if they had any wisdom at all. He then related the suffering he was going through — hungry and thirsty, in rags and mistreated. He was homeless for Christ's sake. Yet the Corinthians suffered not. They honored themselves.

Herein lies the difference between Paul and the Corinthians. He worked hard to make a living so as not to impose while sharing the Gospel. He would get cursed, but in return give blessings. He would endure persecution and answer kindly to slander. He didn't mind being looked down on. Why? He had the humility of Christ for the sake of the Corinthians.

Pride and self-righteousness eventually threaten the harmony of any church. Who should be honored? Only God.

Grantham is pastor of Pineview Church, Clinton.

LIFE AND WORK

What about the Antichrist

Revelation 13:1-10, 16-17

By Michael Jones

Our study in the book of Revelation is timely for several reasons. In one aspect, it is timely because some of the best selling Christian books on the market deal with the end times. It is also timely in that as we look around, we see the possibility that the end time could be close at hand. When reading about the end time in Revelation, an often asked question is: What about the Antichrist? Is there really an Antichrist? What is his role? What is our response as believers? The lesson for today explores the Antichrist and his

role in the end times. It also focuses on what our response should be to evil in the world right now. Let's take a look at what the Antichrist will do.

The Antichrist will popularize Satan (13:1-4). John gives a very disturbing description of the beast here. It had ten horns and seven heads. It resembled a leopard but had the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. The dragon, Satan, gave authority to the beast and because of this, men worshipped it. The Antichrist is making Satan popular. Because of the power given to him by Satan, men will be awed by the



Jones

Antichrist, people will be led to worship Satan, and his popularity will increase.

The Antichrist will blaspheme God (Rev. 13:5-6). "The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies." "He opened his mouth to blaspheme God." The blaspheme the antichrist will use is an effort to lessen Christ's sovereignty, holiness and majesty. It is insulting, showing a lack of reverence for God by trying to take away his deity. Many understand this to mean the Antichrist will be a great orator. Through words he will mesmerize crowds and God will be blasphemed.

If this is the role of the Antichrist in the last days, what is the lesson we can learn by knowing this? First of all, being

lead to worship Satan may not be as obvious as it sounds. All would say we would never worship the beast John describes in verses 1-4. However, being led to worship Satan may be more subtle. Our problem is that many times we may become swept up in worshipping Satan with out even being aware of what we are doing. Once figured out, it is too late. This can happen in the music we listen to, activities we become a part of, what we allow to be on our television, and the places we go. We need to not be swept into worshipping Satan in even subtle ways.

Another lesson is, the only way we can know if someone is blaspheming God is to know God and know what God has said in scriptures. Unfortunately, many Christians spend little time hiding God's word away in their heart. As believers, we must

know the word of God. It should be upon our hearts, tied as a symbol on our hands and bound on our foreheads. Knowing God's word will help us reject any teaching which lessens Christ's sovereignty and holiness.

The description John gives of the beast from the sea is a future Antichrist. The Antichrist popularizing Satan and blaspheming God are both futuristic roles the Antichrist will ultimately fill. Yet, as believers we must realize there are still applications for us today. There are present day expressions of the future work of the Antichrist in our culture. We are called to be diligent, mindful of the work of Satan in our culture and not be even subtly led to worship Satan. We must be able to recognize blaspheme against God.

Jones is associate pastor/youth minister at Monticello Church, Monticello.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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Mother of autistic son buoyed by church

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP) — When Cecilia and Harry Hernandez were asked if their 10-year-old autistic son, Chris, would participate in the Special Friends ministry at East Orlando Church, their first response was, "Why would you want him there?"

son's disability was a punishment for sin. The family also had experienced the pain of seeing people withdraw from them out of fear or misunderstanding.

East Orlando Church seemed different. Members were reaching out to them with a genuine compassion. Shortly after moving to the area, the family received an invitation to the church from a co-worker, a letter of welcome from the church, and a visit from McCain.

"I didn't promise anything other than to teach [Chris] about Jesus," recalled McCain, who now is involved in starting a special needs ministry at First Church, Kissimmee, Fla. She also does consulting in special education ministries on behalf of the Florida Baptist Convention.

The couple agreed to let Chris participate in Special Friends. He enjoyed being there so much that it drew the other family members to the church. One by one, Chris, his parents, and his two younger brothers received Christ and have been active members of the church for the past 10 years.

Chris, now age 20, is still involved in the Special Friends ministry, which now consists of about 30 people in five classes. "All you have to say is, 'It's time to go to church,' and he's waiting at the door," his mother said.

His brothers — Tommy, 18, and Michael, 16 — both are in the youth group. Cecilia has served as nursery coordinator and Harry was a senior adult Sunday School teacher until his death.

"Our family has felt the support of the church all these years, but especially since my husband passed away," Cecilia said. "I feel like the church is my family. They accept Chris for who he is, they love him, they are involved in his life, they come to the house and visit him."

Parents of special needs children need to know that there are people who care and will share the love of Christ with them, Cecilia said.

"Sometimes people will not try to help you because they're afraid or don't understand, so they back away," she said. "That makes me, as a mother to a special needs person, feel hurt."

"It's because of the loneliness you have. You don't want to ask for help, but at my church, people reached out to my family. I didn't have to ask, they asked me."

Despite success stories such as this one, being invited to church can be a rare experience for families with special needs children, said Margie Pratt, special education director for First Church, Inverness, Fla.

One parent told Pratt, "I can't believe you're inviting me to church. I've been asked to leave many times, but never invited to attend any."

A special needs ministry can be hard work, Pratt acknowledged, but its rewards far outweigh any difficulties. The Inverness church's 10-year-old special needs department includes more than 100 members from five group homes.

"If a person leaves the class with one basic Bible truth, God will use it and we've done what we were supposed to do," Pratt said.

Robbie Arnold, special education director for Wayside Church in Miami, said her goal is for people with special needs "to become a part of church life, just like any other member."

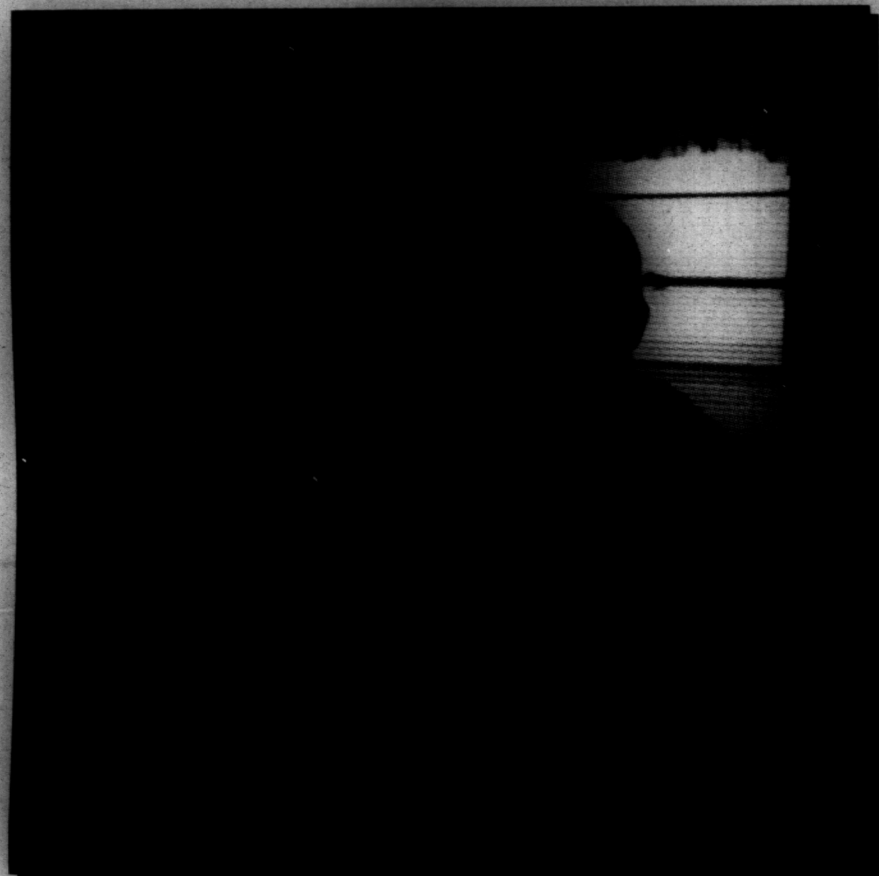
Begun 21 years ago with two teenagers, Wayside's special education department now has approximately 140 members, including some who serve as greeters, ushers and Mission Friends workers in the church.

The special needs ministry of Delaney Street Church in Orlando began 25 years ago to meet the needs of one person, noted coordinator Dottie Rich. Today, the department has five Sunday School classes, including ones for senior adults, the hearing impaired and for those with Down syndrome.

Despite care to establish classes to meet specific needs, "we've tried so hard to make it a comfortable place to be, not so specialized they feel they don't belong," Rich said.

Ken Anstadt, a Sunday school teacher for Delaney Street and a retired special education teacher, said special education ministries should provide ways for people with special needs to learn to become servants of God.

For more information on special education ministries, contact Hughes at (904) 396-2351, ext. 8210.



PLACE TO BELONG — Dottie Rich (left), founder and coordinator of the special needs ministry of Delaney Street Baptist Church in Orlando, models the love and acceptance that is available to all people through Christ. (BP photo by Ken Touchton.)

Bobbi McCain, Special Friends director at the time, simply replied, "Why not?"

In the past, the Hernandez family had been scorned by people who suggested their

Prayerful preparation yields success in Golan Heights

GOLAN HEIGHTS (BP) — In the land where Jesus walked and taught, a group of Georgia young people share their faith among the Druze.

Chatter passes between the 23 members of the outreach team from Warren Church in Augusta, Ga. "Did you get that street over there? No, OK, let's get that one and then we'll move on to the next village..."

They pause, sip some water, then pick up their sacks of cassettes and literature and trudge off. The Golan Heights swelters under cloudless skies; cloudless except for the day the team prays for rain and God obliges by sending a downpour that even locals say is unusual for this time of year.

About 30,000 Druze live in the four villages visited by the team, composed mostly of high school seniors and college freshmen, who deliver Christian materials to a high percentage of the households.

For most of these young people, this trip to Israel is their first outside the United States. Often they are invited into homes for juice or freshly picked cherries. At one home, three team members receive a whole basket of plump cherries.

During the week, one man prays to receive Christ as Savior after going through the tape and materials the team leaves.

Local Christian workers among the Druze are delighted with the warm response the Warren team gets and comment that the Druze are more responsive to the gospel than ever before.

"Never have I seen them so hungry," one of the workers says. They plan extensive follow-up visits and discussions with



SPREADING THE WORD — A trucker in Israel's Golan Heights accepts Christian materials offered by a member of a mission team from Georgia during a distribution project among the Druze people. (BP special photo)

the many Druze who express interest in the Christian message during the team's weeklong visit.

Prayer is a vital part of the Golan Heights project. More than 1,000 people support it with prayer.

"God has really impressed on each of us how important prayer is," says Chuck Gordon, project leader and minister of students at Warren Church.

The church prayed for months before adopting the project. Once they did, each member of the team signed up 50 prayer supporters for it. The team spent their first day in Israel prayerwalking through the villages in which they later would work.

"Because of that intense prayer, we've seen God's hand at work," Gordon says.

He also beams with pride at the maturity and poise his team displays as they hand out materials and share their faith. Some of the students met with 20 high school teachers who asked many questions about Christianity.

"Though the questions were sometimes grilling and grueling, God proved himself so faithful again as always," Gordon says. "Their questions made it impossible not to share the message of salvation through Jesus Christ."

By the end of the week, the Warren team has distributed 2,000 copies of the film, "Jesus" film, audiotapes of the film, Arabic-language New Testaments and other evangelistic materials along the hilly streets of the Golan Heights, in the land where Jesus walked and taught.

Bibliocipher

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ZVAC GSHT MENCTLL VP
AED, SCW XHETW, LSJECR,
NAEL MSL AT VP MAVD E
LKSFT, AT NASN XVDTHA
SPNTH DT EL KHTPTH-
HTW GTPVHT DT: PVH AT
MSL GTPVHT DT.

ZVAC VCT: PEPNTTC

Clue: A = H

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark One: Two.